Unlike many twentieth-century critics, who believe that Ariosto merely incorporated elements of the profeminist argument into a work whose main concerns lay elsewhere, Benson suggests that he was actively engaged in demonstrating the fallacies of the extreme misogynist position, which he personified in Orlando's madness. She maintains that Ariosto contrasts two kinds of love in the Ruggiero/Bradamante and Orlando/Angelica plots in order to persuade his readers to revise their attitudes toward women. She isolates three narrative devices that work to bring this about: first, the three debates on the nature of women; second, the position of the narrator, who shifts between profeminist and anti-feminist arguments; and third, the wide variety of female characters, who are used to "illustrate the humanist argument that moral and intellectual potential is as varied in women as in men" (92). But if Ariosto demonstrates the error of misogyny, dismissing it as the product of disappointed love, he does not advocate a role for women outside marriage. Instead, in Bradamante he portrays a woman who is willingly submissive and morally commendable in her exemplification of the primary feminine virtues—chastity, piety, and dedication to family.

When Benson turns to Spenser, she finds a different context for the arguments about women: the reign of Elizabeth I, which produced the necessity for an eloquent encomium of femininity. Here too Benson departs from much contemporary criticism in her contention that the feminine is not simply an allegorical prop to male order but an essential principle in *The Faerie Queene.* In fact, she holds that Spenser establishes the feminine as fundamental to both social and cosmic order. In her view, he accomplishes this by three techniques: first, he uses female figures like Venus and Isis to constitute a feminine cosmology; second, he creates a new model of female virtue in Britomart; and third, he defends Elizabeth directly in the Proems. The result is a text that not only hypothesizes the feminine as a source of strength for the nation but defines it as vital for maintaining peace, justice, and order in the kingdom. Yet once again, as Benson shows, this defense of women is ultimately paradoxical. Spenser may define the feminine as inherent in good government, but he does not advocate an increased public role for women. "Like all writers of paradoxical defenses, he writes political action out of the script for most women because he writes political ambition out of their character" (281).

The Invention of the Renaissance Woman will, of course, be of interest to specialists working in the Italian and English Renaissance; but its analyses will also prove stimulating to the wider audience of those interested in the question of women and representation. By her insistance on the specificity of the rhetorical strategies she delineates and on the importance of applying them to these texts, Benson explores an important Historicist avenue.

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Getz, Faye Marie. *Healing and Society in Medieval England: A Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus.* Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991. pp. lxxiii + 378.

Faye Marie Getz provides for the first time the entire text of a fifteenth-century English translation of Gilbertus Anglicus's *Compendium medicinae.* Until the editor's identification of over twelve manuscripts, no Middle English translations of this thirteenth-century learned Latin text were known to exist.

As Monica Green has demonstrated in a past issue of *MFN* (11 [spring 1991]: 5-6), there is a tremendous need for good critical editions of medieval medical texts, but the value of Getz's work goes far beyond this. In an extremely useful introduction and commentary, she has attempted to place the text firmly in the context of society and medicine in the Middle Ages.

The survival of so many English copies of Gilbertus, England's first notable scholastic medical writer, demonstrates the use of learned texts outside university circles. Middle English translators did not simply provide literal translations: they adapted the texts for the specific needs of users, adding, deleting, simplifying and rearranging. Similarly, texts were associated with other works in *compendia*, providing compact, useful medical reference libraries. Evidence from many levels of society, including nobles, clerics, and merchants, shows that recipes similar to those mentioned in Gilbertus were used regularly. The translation of Latin medical texts represents a much larger movement within later medieval literature to provide bodies of useful knowledge in vernacular form for popular consumption.

Because each Middle English translation is to some extent unique, Getz chose to focus on a single manuscript in its historical and textual context, examining as far as possible its preparation, relation to other translations, and incorporation into *compendia.* She selected the Wellcome version for several reasons. Most importantly, the Wellcome manuscript provides clues about its origin. Binding, illumination, and scribal editing all indicate production and probable use in a monastic house. The manuscript is designed primarily for the diagnosis and treatment of easily identifiable conditions. The original text has been rearranged into nineteen chapters that move systematically from the head downward. The addition of short, introductory summaries further facilitates ease of reference, as does the careful definition of difficult terms. Discussion of natural philosophy and the theoretical aspects of medicine are minimized in the translation. Complex technical material in the original Latin text is radically simplified here and most references to authorities are omitted, while literal and concrete imagery is added to further enhance clarity.

The selection of recipes shows a similar concern for utility. The medieval scribe added several new recipes and deleted virtually all references to travel, the use of animals and animal parts in medical preparations, and diseases and treatment of women and children. The absence of material relating to the diseases of women is especially striking in light of the careful attention paid to this subject in other manuscripts. Other versions of the Middle English Gilbertus not only included considerable material relating to women, but were frequently associated in *compendia* with the text on gynecology recently edited by Beryl Rowland in *A Medieval Woman's Guide to Health.* Many vernacular texts, including the one edited by Rowland, provide specific references to female self-help. (Feminist scholars will be glad to know that Getz inserts the missing material into her commentary section.) The omissions in the Wellcome manuscript make Getz's argument for an intended male, monastic audience very persuasive.

In summary, Getz's work is a welcome scholarly addition to the study of medieval medicine. The Middle English text is carefully edited and annotated. The editor provides an ample glossary, which includes the major words used in the text. Many of the definitions are highly technical and may therefore be of little use to the nonspecialist; but Getz's identification of unknown or little-understood Middle English words, and her

inclusion of an alphabetical list of plants mentioned in the Gilbertus text according to genus and species, has the potential to be an extremely valuable tool for scholars in the field.

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Hamburger, Jeffrey F. *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300.* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990. xi + 336, 225 b/w illustrations, 12 colorplates.

This thoroughly researched, clearly organized, and lucidly-written study makes accessible a little-known devotional manuscript, New Haven, Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS 404, which contains a wide range of excerpted texts and lavish cycles of enigmatic illustrations. Hamburger introduces the manuscript with a discussion of mysticism and art, contending that mystics consciously employed images such as those in the *Rothschild Canticles* to stimulate and guide their devotional practices. Probing the text and picture relationships, he points out a wealth of variations in modes and processes of imaging: illustrations *ad verbum* that represent a literal level of meaning ignoring the allegorical purpose of a text, abbreviated texts expanded by memory, cryptic texts explicated by miniatures, enigmatic pictures expounded by texts, abstractions personified, concepts diagrammed, visionary experience simulated, as well as imaging disavowed (apophatic images)—both verbal and visual. The focus of Hamburger's study delineates the programmatic function of the miniatures, which suggests successive steps in the mystical ascent from purgation through illumination to ultimate union with God.

Several aspects of the study will be of interest to feminist medievalists. For one, Hamburger hypothesizes that the book was probably made for or commissioned by a nun or canoness. For another, the manuscript contains sexual allegory. A number of miniatures make use of bridal mysticism in which the soul (*anima*, feminine noun) strives to achieve sexual union with Christ. It is therefore tempting to view these eroticized mystical attempts to bond intimately and directly with God as a case in which texts have been appropriated and images created for the interstices within which religious women had their being, existing between insitutionalized, male-controlled liturgical practices, thus finding opportunities to expand those sanctums of legitimacy through exercises matched to their own needs and desires. Enigmatic visionary images, like those of the Trinity, when associated with women's mystical experiences, would allow art-historical analyses in terms of "domains of deviance," displacements," or "antilanguage forms."[1] Hamburger's groundwork would appear to encourage such explorations, although he himself does not embark on them. Recently, however, Pamela Sheingorn has questioned the notion that the book was made for a woman. Pointing to the prevalence of gender shifts in the art and literature of the Middle Ages, she suggests that the possibility of an intended male user should not be ruled out.[2] If then the book did not belong to women's exclusive discursive space, speculation as to how a male or female reader would have read it differently might prove a fruitful future exercise.

The tiny codex, measuring a mere 118 x 84 mm, could be used while held easily in the hand. The imposing, monumental study, more than four times as large, must be